

# Lutheran Pioneers.

## II.

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### The Bavarian Settlements of the Saginaw Valley.

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*By* TH. GRAEBNER.



CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE,  
ST. LOUIS, MO.



# LUTHERAN PIONEERS.

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### The Bavarian Settlements of the Saginaw Valley.

The Story of Lutheran Pioneer Life in the  
Primeval Forests of Michigan.

Retold Mostly in the Words of the First Colonists

By

*revised and*  
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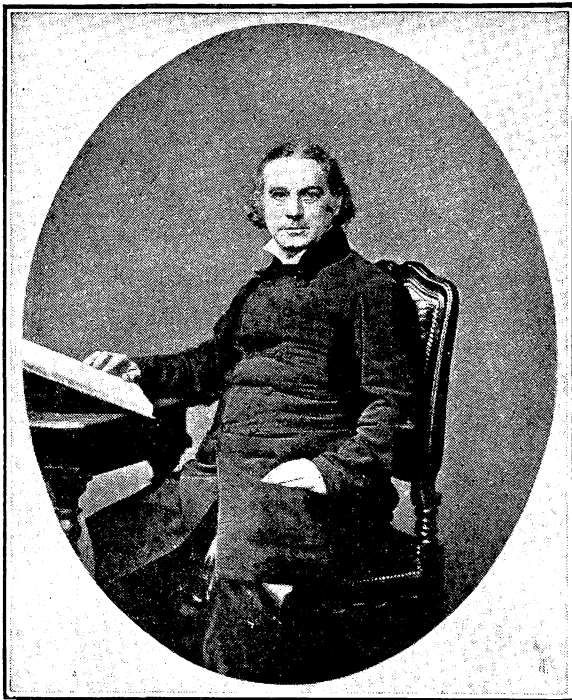


ST. LOUIS, MO.

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Wilhelm Loehe.



## 1. Introductory.

The founding of the Lutheran congregations in the Saginaw Valley, in the State of Michigan, leads us to the little town of Neuendettelsau in Bavaria, Germany. At Neuendettelsau Pastor *Johann Konrad Wilhelm Loehe* was doing a noble and blessed work. Bavaria had not escaped the blight of Rationalism (infidelity) which at that time ruled most of the institutions of learning and many pulpits throughout Germany. The pure doctrines of the Word of God were proclaimed only by a few pastors, and among these Loehe held a recognized leadership. It is a regrettable fact that this man later departed from the truth of the Lutheran Confessions, but during the years in which our story commences, his work was crowned with blessed results both in Germany and America. Awakened souls, eager for salvation, who gathered about the few faithful preachers of the old Gospel, especially sought the chapel in which Loehe held forth, and regarded neither storm nor rain when coming long distances to Neuendettelsau, their hearts burdened with the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Loehe directed such questioners not to the doubtful feelings of the heart nor to human reason, but to the firm foundation of the Word of God.



Friedrich Wyneken.

Filled with an intense love of his Savior, Loehe was deeply stirred when, in the early forties of the last century, he heard of the great distress of the Lutherans in America. In the year 1841 a call for help had been issued by Pastor *Friedrich Wyneken* to the Lutherans of Germany. His burning appeal mightily affected the heart of Loehe, and ultimately led to the foundation of those Lutheran colonies whose origin we are about to relate. Wyneken had written:—

"Thousands of families, your brethren in the faith, possibly your brothers and sisters according to the flesh, are hungry for the strengthening meat of the

Gospel. They cry out and implore you: Oh, help us! Give us preachers to strengthen us with the bread of the Gospel and to instruct our children in the teachings of Jesus Christ! Oh, help us or we are undone! Why do you not assist us? Consider the words: 'What you have done to the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.' Why do you not help us? Is that your love of Jesus? Is it thus you keep His commandment?—It is literally true that many of our German brethren in America thus complain. Besides, in many places there has arisen a new danger. In no other country are there so many sects as in North America. Some have even now directed their attention to the settlements of our German brethren and fellow-Lutherans. Foreign laborers would harvest where the Lord would call His own. Shall our brethren no longer worship in the Church of their fathers, filled with the breath of the Lord, and, instead, recline in the lazarettos of the sects? Shall German piety decay in the New World under the influence of human measures? I beg of you, for Jesus' sake, take hold, organize speedily, do not waste time in consultations! Hasten, hasten! The salvation of immortal souls is at stake! . . .

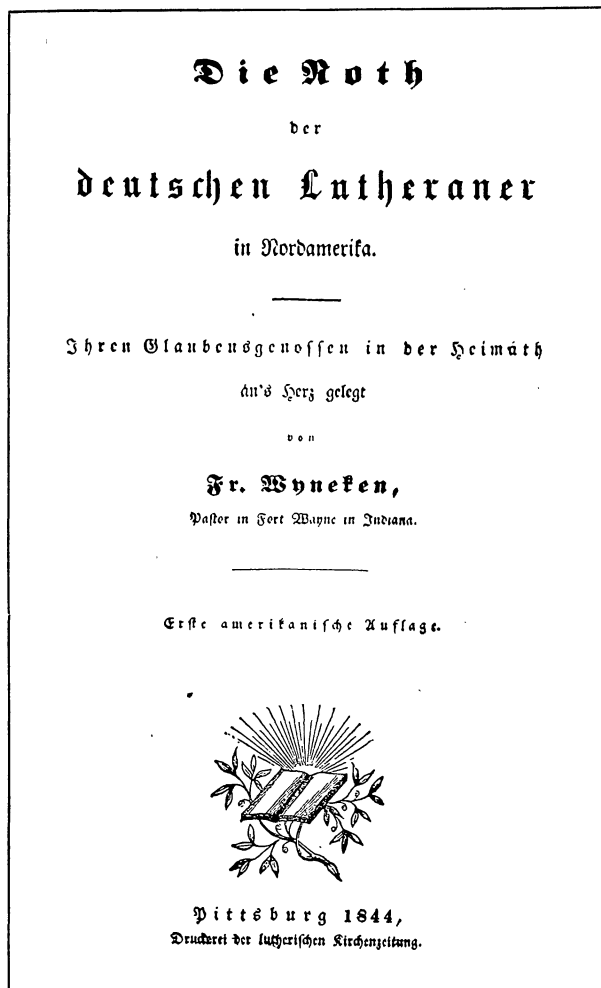
"Consider that thousands of families are scattered over this great area. The parents live and die without hearing the Word of God; no one awakens, reproves, comforts them. Behold, young and old lie upon their deathbeds, and their souls are not even preparing for the great Judgment. The servant of the Lord might direct the lost to the God of holiness, who is to them that are without Christ a devouring fire, but who is in Christ a reconciled Father. He might, by the grace of God and through the Word of His power, lead them to faith and repentance, and the lost souls would be saved. The poor soul looks into the solemn eternity, the approach of death makes dull the eye of the spirit so that it cannot see the reconciled Lord and His Mediator, the merciful High Priest in the Holy of Holies. How many thousands of souls thus unprepared and un comforted pass into eternity!

"It happens that after some years a traveling pastor arrives in one of these settlements. Then the children are brought, and I myself have baptized a dozen or more of children at one time, children of various ages, up to ten and twelve years; but who instructs the baptized? How can the Washing of Regeneration continue its blessed effect and power when there is no preaching of the Word and no Christian instruction? Who will confirm the children, who distribute to them, later, the Lord's Supper? Their parents, of German birth, are themselves heathen, unbaptized; consider that,—German heathen! . . .

"Thousands upon thousands of Germans immigrate every year; only in the last two years between eighty and one hundred thousand. Five thousand have landed in one week alone at Philadelphia. There is a great movement westward.



The descendants of those who have lived for some generations in the Eastern States follow this westward trend. A territory of increasing vastness is being settled by members of our race, and ever wider the area is becoming in which



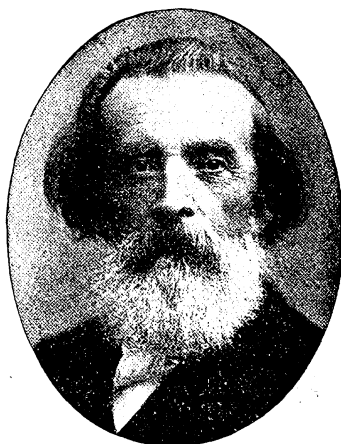
Wyneken's Appeal to the Lutherans of Germany.

there is such great spiritual destitution. Ever greater become our difficulties in the task of surveying this enormous field and of granting these people spiritual aid, and hence with ever greater insistency the call of the Lord addresses itself to your hearts: *'Help! Help in the name of Jesus!'*"



## 2. Frankenmuth.

As early as 1843 Loehe had requested one of his first emissaries, Pastor Wilhelm Hattstaedt, then laboring at Monroe, Michigan, to make inquiry, what, if anything, could be done also for the native Indians by the Lutheran Church. For, ever since Loehe's attention had once been directed to America, his thoughts often dwelt upon the American aborigines, who were then still in complete heathen darkness. Hattstaedt reported that the work of evangelizing the American Indian, was entirely feasible and might best be undertaken jointly with the Lutherans already settled in Michigan. Soon Loehe found a company of young men who were willing to settle as a Lutheran colony in the State of Michigan in order to assist in the conversion of the Red Man through the testimony of a Christian life. These men were mainly young peasants and mechanics. And God had already chosen the man who was to serve this band of colonists as spiritual leader. This man was *Friedrich August Craemer*, then a candidate for the holy ministry, a man of great piety and of iron will-power, "one of those spiritual men cast in heroic mold who by the grace of God became the founders of our Synod." Craemer in 1844 offered his services to Loehe. He visited Neuendettelsau, and there, jointly with the members of the future colony, weekly consultations were held concerning the establishment of a Lutheran settlement in the Michigan forests and the evangelization of the natives.



Friedrich August Craemer.

On May 20, 1845, this little group of Bavarian colonists sailed on the *Caroline* from Bremerhaven with the set purpose in view to establish a missionary settlement among the Indians of North America. Loehe wrote at the time: "Not poverty is the cause of their emigration from their home country; they have, every one of them, been favored with good fortune while in the home-land; some, indeed, have been prosperous. Nothing prompts them but the thought — at once humble and sublime — of founding in the wildernesses of the New World a starting-point for missionary work among the heathen." None of them, indeed, was acquainted with the Indian tongue, but Pastor Craemer had acquired a "perfect knowledge" of English, when he resided in England, and through this means he intended to approach the Indians. Later he mastered the difficult Chippewa tongue.

On the day of departure from Bremerhaven, the ship ran aground on a sandbank. Fortunately the sea was quiet. The ship lay grounded until the following morning. During the long ocean voyage — the *Caroline*, of course.

was a sailing-vessel — Pastor Craemer regularly conducted divine services aboard ship. The daily morning and evening devotions were led by Candidate Lochner. There were a number of children in the company, and these received regular instruction from Lochner every forenoon. But the voyage was not without serious interruptions. Six heavy storms passed over the ship's path, once the *Caroline* collided with another vessel, contrary winds blew the ship from her course, and it drifted for a time among icebergs. Then there was an epidemic of smallpox on board. Four persons died, and also Craemer was down with the disease. At last, on June 8, after a voyage of fifty days, the *Caroline* reached

Olufsen & Lind.

für Auswanderer nach Frankreich u.  
Nordamerika.

Melodie: Was Gott will das ist wohl zu thun. y. y.

Was Gott will, das ist wohl geschehen! Wir müssen Abpfand  
nehmen; Was wohl geht niemand ändern kann und  
wird. Was Gottes Rath befohlen  
hat; das bleibt uns gegeben; <sup>in allem</sup> <sup>was</sup> wir <sup>uns</sup> <sup>leben</sup>

Farewell Song of the Frankenmuth Emigrants.

(Photographic reproduction of the original.)

the port of New York. It was a fine, sun-bright Sunday, the Third after Trinity, and the farewell-service on board ship was a service of praise and thanksgiving.

From New York the immigrants took a Hudson River boat to Albany, and thence they continued their journey by rail. This was on the 13th of July. One hour after their departure from Albany their train collided with another head-on. They were traveling fast at the time, and the coaches were so badly damaged that the train had to be pulled back to Albany. On the evening of the same day the journey was resumed, and four days later the immigrants arrived at Monroe, Mich. From Monroe the colonists made their way to Saginaw, where they intended to remain until the purchase of a suitable tract of land on the Saginaw River, 680 acres in extent, had been concluded.

Soon after their arrival in Saginaw, Pastor Craemer, accompanied by some of his men and a surveyor, struck out for the primeval forest to inspect the land which had been recommended to them, and to have it surveyed. They traveled sixteen miles cross-country from Saginaw, partly over marshy ground. Dense woods covered the entire countryside. There stood the ancient giants of the forest, among them a thick underbrush which had been visited by no human foot except when the red huntsman had penetrated these fastnesses in order to track the wolf, the bear, and the deer.

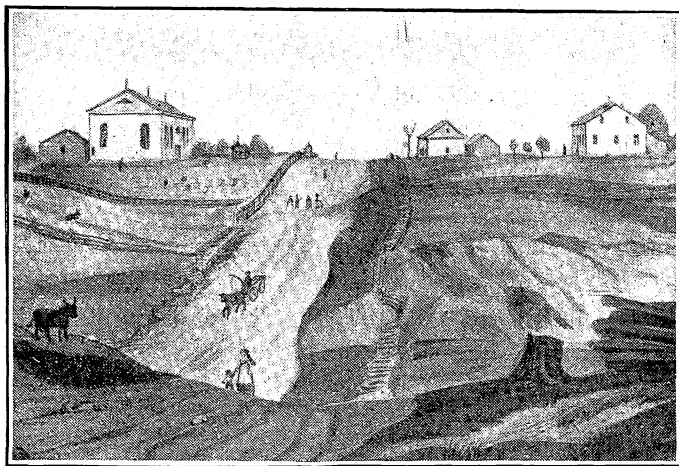
Where now is situated the old cemetery of the Frankenmuth congregation, the first blows of the ax were heard. This was probably in the month of August (1845). While the women remained in Saginaw, the men would set forth on Monday mornings with their tools, in order, first of all, to clear a piece of ground on which it was the intention to build two log-houses. After the unaccustomed labor the men would rest their weary members on rude bedding spread under a temporary shelter of boughs and branches. The pastor regularly led morning and evening devotions. Finally the huts were ready for occupancy. The "Company Hut" was thirty feet in length, and was to serve as a shelter for the five couples and the two single men. The other log-house was intended for the pastor's family and also for the conduct of divine services. There were doors in it, but no windows. The roof was not rain-proof, and during the frequent downpours tables and umbrellas had to be employed to keep the bedding dry. Nevertheless, it was a shelter sufficient for the most urgent needs. Now the women, the baggage, and all household goods were loaded on ox-carts, and the trip from Saginaw to Frankenmuth was successfully accomplished.

Thus did the colony of Frankenmuth originate in the summer of 1845. While the first settlers were busy erecting their log-houses, Craemer already commenced his work among the Indians. Accompanied by an interpreter, he visited the Indian families living in the neighborhood, and also began to teach their children. Craemer worked with utter disregard of self, heeding neither rain nor snow, neither dangers on water nor on land. Several times he was in imminent peril of death when crossing Saginaw Bay. He slept with the Indians in their smoke-filled huts and ate with them out of the same meat-pot.

Pastor J. H. Ph. Graebner later wrote: "I have often heard my dear neighbor and relative Craemer say in after years that these early days in Frankenmuth were full of hardships also for himself and his family. During the first summer they dwelt in an abominable log-cabin, which gave free access to wind and weather from every side. Then the disagreeable intermittent fevers began to afflict him and his family, which, however, did not prevent him from performing his work as a missionary as soon as he would be able to lift his head again. And in the years that followed Craemer spent much of his strength in traveling the trackless forests, afoot and on horseback, visiting the Indians in their wigwams. Often,

upon such trips, while in the depths of the woods, he would be attacked by the fever, so that he would hardly be able to remain upon his horse.

In the summer of 1846 the colony Frankenmuth received a new lot of settlers, some ninety persons, all directly from Germany. It now became necessary to build a church. In August of the same year a tract of land had been cleared as "church-land." There was much interruption of the work, due to the fevers which raged in the settlement, but the little church finally was completed, a log-house, 42 by 26 feet, with three windows on each side. It was dedicated to the Triune God with prayer, preaching, and Holy Communion on Second Christmas Day. On the following day the first three converted pagans of the forest were baptized.

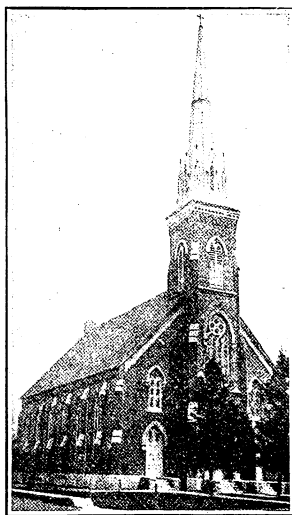


Church and Parsonage, Frankenmuth, 1859.

Due to new immigration, Frankenmuth grew rapidly. Craemer conducted divine services every day, morning and evening, preaching a series of sermons on some Biblical book. He commenced to experience difficulties in finding time for his work among the Indians, and it was found necessary to provide an assistant for this work. The Mission House in Leipsic now sent Missionary E. Baierlein, who arrived in 1847 together with a band of immigrants whose leader was Pastor Graebner. Baierlein labored jointly with Craemer for a year among the natives. But since the Indians gradually withdrew from the vicinity of Frankenmuth, it was found necessary to establish a mission-post (Bethany) on the Pine River in Isabella County. Missionary Baierlein removed to Bethany in 1849, and Frankenmuth from that time on ceased to be, in the proper sense, an outpost of heathen mission-work. Craemer thereafter was not personally active in the work among the natives.

Late in the summer of 1849, the pious and splendidly gifted Professor Wolter of the Practical Seminary at Fort Wayne died of the cholera. As his successor Craemer was elected by Synod, and with many tears the Frankenmuth colony permitted their beloved pastor to follow this call. In May, 1851, his successor, Rev. K. A. W. Roebbelen, was installed.

Frankenmuth was even then a congregation of considerable size, and some of the people had begun to acquire wealth. Here and there pretty farmhouses had been built in the place once occupied by rude log-cabins and huts. A saw-mill and a flour-mill had been erected, and three times a week the mail was brought by carrier from Saginaw. The old log-church now no longer sufficed to accommodate the worshipers, and the colony proceeded to build a spacious frame church, which was dedicated in 1851. Roebbelen's successor was Pastor Ottomar Fuerbringer, formerly stationed at Freistadt, Wis., who was installed in the fall of 1858.



Frankenmuth Church.

### 3. Frankentrost.

"As a missionary outpost for the work among the Indians," says the founder of Frankentrost, the now sainted J. H. Ph. Graebner, "the colony of Frankenmuth had only a limited period of usefulness, since it could not follow the Red Man from hunting-ground to hunting-ground in the primeval forests. But the colony prospered and in the course of years became a flourishing congregation. This circumstance prompted Loehe and his friends to inaugurate a new plan of colonization. Loehe saw the danger of losses to our Church through the settlement of Lutheran immigrants in widely scattered communities, especially in view of the activity of the sects, and suggested that the settlers unite, before emigration, into colonies, each with a pastor of its own, and build up new Lutheran communities in North America. In this manner the plan of founding the settlement Frankentrost was conceived in the fall of 1846."



J. H. Ph. Graebner.

The name *Frankentrost* (Consolation of the Franks, or Bavarians) was chosen for this settlement because, as Loehe remarked, "the first emigrants having had the *Courage*" (Frankenmuth means "Courage of the Franks") "to settle on strange, Indian soil, the successors of these shall take *Consolation* from these their brethren, and rest assured that the same divine blessing and the same divine favor and guidance are to be their lot likewise."

The man who was to serve this colony as pastor was already chosen by Loehe. It was one of his Emergency Men, candidate of theology *Johann Heinrich Philipp Graebner*. In 1846 Loehe issued a call for participants in the new venture, and in fall of the same year a number of persons who had become weary of the rationalism proclaimed in pulpits and classrooms, and who longed for the preaching of the pure Gospel and free exercise of religion, announced their readiness to participate. They gathered among themselves a fund of 6,000 guilders (\$4,000), for the purchase of a tract of land in the State of Michigan.

The first troop of these emigrants left on the steamer *Creole* on the 18th of April, 1847. Pastor Graebner followed with the rest on the *Hermine*, which weighed anchor April 22. In the following we have copied out some manuscript notes of Pastor Graebner concerning the voyage to New York and thence to the Saginaw Valley, and the early experiences of the colony:—

"The instructions of Pastor Loehe provided that I travel in steerage together



with my colonists. If our vessel should meet with dangers, I was to think of my own rescue only after the last of my charges had left the ship. In case of extreme peril I should be found ready to remain on board with those who should happen to remain there, and comfort them in the moment of death. However, it pleased God in His mercy to lead me and my dear colonists safely across the ocean. After a voyage of six weeks we arrived, June 1, 1847, in New York harbor.

"On the next day, after a successful trip up the beautiful Hudson, we arrived about noon at Albany, and on the afternoon of the same day we continued our journey by rail to Buffalo. In Buffalo we remained about five hours, during which time our baggage was transferred to the steamer which was to take us across Lake Erie to Detroit. We had bought tickets directly from New York to Detroit. On Sunday, about noon, we arrived at Toledo and then continued the voyage to Detroit.

"There was, at that time, no other way of reaching Frankenmuth from Detroit, except by team, and we experienced considerable difficulty in securing a sufficient number of wagons to transport so large a company and so much freight. Part of the men remained as guards over our baggage until the required number of teams had been secured. On the third day after our arrival in Detroit, the entire company was happily under way for the cross-country trip to Frankenmuth. Baierlein had rejoined us at Detroit. Some of our teamsters knew the whereabouts of Frankenmuth, and after traveling for three days, we arrived about noon at Birch Run, where we were informed that Frankenmuth was about sixteen miles distant. However, the teams had to rest during the night at Bridgeport, and so Baierlein, myself, and two other young fellows decided to cover the rest of the journey by foot. At the end of five hours of very hard walking we arrived at the parsonage in Frankenmuth. The teams, together with the rest of companions, arrived about noon the next day (June 11, 1847).

"The task of selecting a parcel of land for our colony of Frankentrost at once engaged our attention. Together with a surveyor, Mr. Beach, Pastor Craemer, myself, and about a dozen of my men left on the very next morning in a northerly direction from Frankenmuth and entered the primeval forest. After tramping steadily for about two hours through the splendid wood, our guide made a halt and said, 'Here we are six miles north of Frankenmuth.'

"About noon we made a second halt at a creek with fine, clear water, and there prepared our tea. As we consumed our repast, we decided to make our camp in the same place during the night. We had taken with us provisions for two days and a night. The afternoon was spent in exploring the country in every direction, and then we requested our guide to take us back to the place where we had spent the noon-hour. We arrived there about sundown, and at once made a large fire. We again had a cup of tea, whereupon we sang a few evening

songs, and then each of us wrapped himself up in his woolen blanket. Thus we spent the first night in peaceful slumber, under the protection of God and His holy angels, among the trees of the American forest primeval.

"After we had spent another forenoon in exploring the land, we were all agreed — the best land that we had seen was the spot where we had rested on the preceding day. Having definitely selected this tract, we returned the same afternoon to Frankenmuth.

"The acre of government land then cost a dollar and a quarter. But since at that time Michigan state bonds could be purchased very cheaply, and were accepted at face value for the purchase of land, the acre cost us only eighty-two cents.

"When each member of the colony — there were twenty-two families in all — had decided upon the size of the tract which he intended to call his own, the surveyor was again summoned in order to measure out for each man his parcel. This work of surveying was continued throughout an entire week, which we again spent in the beautiful green forest. On the second day, just after our noonday meal, we saw a few clouds rising in the west beyond the tall timber, and our Mr. Beach said to me, 'Mr. Graebner, I guess this afternoon we may get some heavy rain.' When I asked, 'Well, Mr. Beach, what ought we to do?' he replied, 'I think we ought to fix some shelter.' I apprised the men of Mr. Beach's fears and of his suggestion, and we at once set to work building a shelter of branches according to Mr. Beach's directions. Two hours sufficed for the completion of a hut 24 feet long and 14 feet wide, and scarcely was it completed when the downpour commenced. We smoked our pipes in comfort until the rain ceased. This shelter stood exactly upon the spot where the parsonage was built later, and served as a domicile until each had built his log-cabin upon his own property. Just in front of our leafy shelter there stood a mighty oak tree. During the noon-hour some of the young men remarked that this tree on the parsonage lot ought to be felled by united efforts, — 'how, if we went to work at once?' No sooner said than done. Four men seized their axes and commenced work; after a little while four others took a hand. After two hours of uninterrupted work the mighty giant of the forest fell — he measured more than six feet in diameter. — As soon as the task of surveying was accomplished, the labor of building log-houses commenced, and as each one roughly completed his cabin, he would go to Frankenmuth and bring his family to dwell with him in his new home.

"The congregation desired that we follow the example of Frankenmuth and conduct brief morning and evening services every day. During the summer, commencing about Easter, they would gather at six in the morning and evening, and after St. Michael's Day, during the winter half-year, at seven in the morning and five at night."

Concerning the services held during the early years of the colony, Pastor

Graebner reported to Loehe: "You would rejoice to see the pretty quarters in which we worship at my house. It is only a log-cabin, but the logs are nicely squared and trimmed, and the inner arrangement is quite in German style. The west room is my domicile, the east room our church, which has three windows. Behind the desk, which takes the place of a pulpit, there is a large chair, and about the altar there are grouped nine benches for the congregation. I can assure you that I experience, at times, great happiness as I kneel or stand at the altar at six in the morning and chant the Kyrie or Te Deum with my congregation. Then, as I see the morning sun rising above the green forest and shedding its benign and gentle light through the windows, the thought comes to me that our dear Savior would indicate how well He is pleased that His praises are sung and a tabernacle erected to His name in this wilderness, where but a little while ago, only the dreadful howling of the wild beasts was heard."



Homeland, Farewell!

#### 4. Frankenlust.

When Loehe and his associates in Germany observed the ready response which their system of colonization had found in wide circles, they devoted their attention to the development of a plan which had some time been maturing in their minds. The intention now was to collect a fund of several thousand dollars and to purchase, for this amount, a large tract of land which was to be sold at a low price to Lutheran colonists. About this time the Hannoverian Ferdinand Sievers, then candidate for the holy ministry, offered himself to Loehe for service in North America. Sievers was invited for a conference to Neuendettelsau in order that the plan of colonization might be jointly discussed. Complete agreement was

reached on all points, and soon Candidate Sievers emigrated with a small number of families, accompanied by Candidate Brauer of Hannover and a number of scholars for the Seminary at Fort Wayne.

When Sievers and his colonists, provided with considerable funds, arrived, Craemer at first suggested that the new colony of *Frankenlust* be established on the Tittipiwassée River, about half-way between Saginaw and the mission-outpost Bethany. But the land on the Tittipiwassée did not suit the immigrants, and so the well-watered country on the Saginaw River, about twelve miles north of Saginaw, was selected for settlement. Frankenlust lies some four or five miles west of the Saginaw River, and of what is now Bay City, on a little stream, the Sqwa-qwa-ning.



Ferdinand Sievers.

About this time the congregation at Saginaw was founded. Pastor Graebner relates: "Pastor Sievers, who was best able to get to Saginaw because he had a horse, at first preached in private homes; sometimes at Stelzrieder's, sometimes at Geuder's. There were twelve families who gathered for divine services in the fall of 1849, whenever Sievers made his preaching-trips. Then Pastor Cloeter arrived from Germany, and Geuder proposed that the congregation issue a pastoral call to Cloeter. Fears were expressed that such a handful of people could not possibly sustain a minister. Then it was that Geuder said: 'We certainly can do it if we have a will. Among the children of Israel eleven tribes had to support the twelfth. There are twelve of us, should we not be able to support the thirteenth? I shall give a month's earnings for the support of the pastor, and will offer him a home with me, to begin with. Which of you is willing to give a month's earnings for the pastor's salary?' All gladly assented, and Pastor Cloeter accepted the call. The name of the pious Geuder ought to be never forgotten in the congregations of the Saginaw Valley."

In 1850 Pastor Sievers was able to report the dedication of a church edifice. He wrote to Loehe: "On the 12th of November we rejoiced in the dedication of our new house of worship at Frankenlust. It is built of fair-hewn logs, is 28 feet in length and 24 feet wide, and the insides are plastered with clay. My few schoolchildren and the women of the settlement had wound garlands and chaplets, as well as it could be done with only evergreens and autumn foliage at hand, and above the altar the words were spelled out in evergreens: 'St. Paul's Church.' St. Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles, shall remain our constant pattern, that we may not forget our call to build also among the pagans of Michigan a tabernacle to the Lord. The morning address, on Luke 19, 1 ff., was assigned to me, and Pastor Graebner preached in the afternoon. We sang our praises to God, who, after long and weary waiting, had given us grace to dedicate unto Him a quiet sanctuary. Of course, much is still lacking; there is neither bell, nor organ, nor altar-painting. A pulpit and an altar we shall have before long." Pastor Sievers donated 63 acres of land to the church, the colonists 27 acres. There were 16 families in the colony at that time. Loehe remarks, in a paragraph on the work at Frankenlust: "The results achieved by Pastor Sievers have entailed the suffering of unspeakable hardships."

His neighbor Graebner tells the following incident: "I shall never forget the first pastoral conference which was held at the home of Pastor Sievers when he was still single. At night the entire conference retired to rest upon one long spread of straw. In one of his rooms Sievers had caused wheat-straw to be spread upon the floor. Upon this, linen cloths had been laid, and a pillow for each. We covered ourselves with linen cloths, and all enjoyed a restful sleep. I was indeed tired enough, having made afoot that same day the twenty miles to Frankenlust."

## 5. Frankenhilf.

In the year 1850 Pastor Loehe decided to establish a new settlement in the Saginaw Valley. This time the love which he had for his poverty-stricken countrymen was the motive which prompted the undertaking. At that time there were in Bavaria many peasants who were barely able to eke out an existence. Many young people were prevented from entering matrimony because they did not possess the amount of property which the state had made a condition of issuing marriage licenses. Loehe wanted to provide an opportunity for such people in a Settlement for the Poor, to be planted in Michigan. Since this colony was intended to provide a home for people who were unable to make a living in Germany, the colony was given the name *Frankenhilf* (Aid for Bavarians).

In the year 1849 Pastor Sievers had received instructions from Germany to invest the Colonization Fund, already referred to, in the purchase of land for another, the fourth, settlement. In the spring of 1850 a number of families, under the leadership of candidate of theology Herman Kuehn, left Germany

in order to found this colony. Kuehn succeeded in bringing his emigrants as far as Detroit. But a number of his people decided to remain here, others went to Saginaw or joined other settlements, and finally a single family, the Ammons, remained true to the purpose of starting the colony of Frankenhilf.

These Ammons were not only people of good education, but, above all, very devout and of noble traits of character, also, we should add, enthusiastic followers of Loehe. Pastor Loehe was very anxious to secure for them the services of a pastor, and so Pastor Deindoerfer, with a small number of emigrants, was sent forth and arrived at Frankenhilf in the following year.

On the second Sunday in Advent, 1851, the first service was held at Frankenhilf, in the home of the Ammons. Ammon also assigned a room in his house to the pastor's use, and this room was used for divine services. And although he had already spent his entire fortune, he took the pastor into free board. In 1853 the first church was built, of hewn logs, and measuring 36 by 25 feet. Now also this colony was provided with a sanctuary for Lutheran worship.

Frankenhilf, like the other Saginaw Valley congregations, from the very beginning fostered the Christian day-school. This wise measure, dictated as well by Christian sense as by love, has unquestionably, next to the preaching of the pure Word, been the main reason why these congregations have flourished and grown, until they have become large and active congregations, which now offer to God the sacrifices of their lips and hands in gratitude for the spiritual riches which through church and school have been their share these many years.

Jointly with these old Bavarian settlements in the Saginaw Valley, our entire American Lutheran Church, so far as she is true to her Confessions, praises the wisdom and mercy of God, who, in spite of the human frailties of those who were the founders of these congregations has poured out temporal and spiritual blessings upon them from the very first age of their history. These Franconian settlements have been a benediction to our entire Lutheran Church. There is—to mention only one factor—with the exception, possibly, of the Perry County, Mo., congregations, in the entire Lutheran Church of North America, no group of congregations which has given a greater number of men to the service of the Christian ministry in church and school than these settlements of the Saginaw Valley. This, too, we must view as a blessing which accrues to those congregations which regard the training of the children through the medium of Christian day-schools as one of the prime duties of the Church.

In the concluding chapter of this sketch we shall supply some detail concerning the mode of life in these early settlements. Our generation is in danger of forgetting, and has in great part already forgotten, that the foundations of our beloved Missouri Synod were laid through the incalculable labors and manifold sacrifices of those pioneers whom we rightly call the Pilgrim Fathers of our Church. In supplying these data, we follow the manuscript record of the founder

of the Frankentrost colony, J. H. Ph. Graebner. It is very probably the only original record extant of life in the Michigan colonies as it was in the first decade of their existence, and is, for this reason alone, of sufficient value to be preserved, at least in a few extracts, for future generations of Lutherans.

## 6. Life on the Frontier in the Forties.

The first pastor of Frankentrost writes, in his reminiscences:—

“Cash money was hardly ever seen in Michigan at that time, and was used almost exclusively for purchasing flour. All other goods were bought for so-called ‘store-certificates.’ Sometimes the settlers would experience difficulty in raising enough cash money in order to purchase a barrel of flour, and it would happen that the supply of flour would be exhausted and not a cent of money at hand to buy this all but indispensable necessity. I could relate many a story to show how the Lord provided for His own in those days. Let me tell about an experience which I had in my own household. It was at the time that Pastor Kuehn had come from Germany and was stopping a few days with us in Frankentrost. One day, after we had just arisen from the dinner table, and our guest had stepped into the other room, my dear wife came to me with tears in her eyes and said, ‘The flour is all used up, I can no longer bake.’ I tried to comfort her by reminding her of the little text about the ‘young ravens,’ etc. Then I went out to friend Kuehn. A little while later, as we were standing at the fence, the wife of neighbor Buchinger stepped over to us and said to me, ‘Pastor, we have not been able for some time to give you anything. I should like to have brought you some money, but my husband works in the mill at Frankenmuth, and Hubinger says that he cannot give him his wages in cash, but only in flour. Would you have use for a sack of flour?’ I told her that a sack of flour would be most welcome. Then I went in to my dear wife and told her how marvelously the good Lord had helped us out of our predicament. We Christians, of course, know that every morsel is received out of the beneficent hand of God, but we realize this best in times of poverty. But while it is true that we have been very poor, we really never lacked the necessities of life, and never had to suffer hunger. Therefore—give thanks to the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth forever!

“All of my dear Frankentrost people at times had to suffer want, but only a few of them ever got into such straits that they actually had to get along with a bare subsistence for a short time. My dear old Mr. Moll (who, by the way, never permitted his cheery temperament to become clouded) told me one day, ‘Pastor, in my house we were at times reduced to such extremities that we either had potatoes and no bread, or only bread and coffee.’ At a ripe old age he concluded his pilgrimage at Frankentrost, but even then the years of grinding poverty were long past, and some of the people had begun to acquire wealth.

At the time when a certain degree of prosperity had become noticeable in the colony, I happened to meet my dear old Moll as delegate at a synodical convention. On this occasion he gave me a ten-dollar gold piece, which I at first refused to accept. 'Take it, pastor,' he said, with tears in his eyes, 'take it; it is only a small instalment paid off on my debt; I can spare it now, the season of want, praise God, is now past.'

"As we had to get all our supplies from the stores at Saginaw, and the all but impassable roads often rendered traffic extremely difficult, it would frequently happen that the lack of all kinds of minor necessities would become acutely felt in the various households. Hence, whenever it became known that some one was going to Saginaw, there would be a considerable number of little orders of all kinds to be filled. And, of course, whenever the 'Herr Pastor' would go to Saginaw, he would likewise be commissioned to get various articles of which the supply had run short. I have often returned from Saginaw loaded down with orders like a palfrey-mule, and in each house I would deliver the parcels I had been asked to bring with me. People were measurably certain that the 'Herr Pastor' would not forget, since he had a habit of noting down all such orders.

"Whenever women happened to go to Saginaw, they would arrange to go two, three, or four in company, but never singly. It was not at all an unusual experience for them to start on the return trip somewhat late and in the gathering dusk to lose their way while still in the forest. Their cries of distress would cause excitement throughout the settlement, shots were fired and tin-horns blown everywhere, until they were found.' Upon such occasions the protecting hand of God more than once was very noticeable, as in the following instances.

"Dr. Koch, of Frankenmuth, at that time was the only physician in our vicinity. One day he was making professional calls in Frankentrost, and the sun already stood low when he had administered his remedies to several people who were sick with fever. He took a cup of coffee at the parsonage, and I suggested that owing to the lateness of the hour it would be best for him to spend the night with me, rather than expose himself to danger in the forest. But he said that he had several people down with the fever at Frankenmuth whose condition was such that they required his attention that same night, and so, walking afoot, the good doctor set out on the way to Frankenmuth. But he made no professional calls that night. He got lost in the wood, and for three nights and two entire days he strayed about in the district between Frankenmuth and Frankentrost. Only on the third day he arrived, completely exhausted, in Bridgeport. Emerging from the forest, he received the hospitality of an English farmer. While roaming about in the wilderness, Dr. Koch continually had masticated fresh twigs of the linden in order to satisfy his gnawing hunger. This happened at the end of winter, and during the second night spent in the forest, Dr. Koch had the toes of one foot so badly frost-bitten that he was confined to his home for months.



"My brother Conrad had settled at Frankentrost about one and a quarter mile distant from the colony proper. One day my sister Margaret, then Mrs. Geuder, and her friend, Mrs. Hemeder, intended to make a visit in Frankentrost and left Saginaw early in the afternoon, expecting to reach my brother's house by nightfall. It happened to be the last night of the year. They might have covered the distance during the hours of daylight that remained, but were retarded by the deep snow through which they had to wade a great part of the way. Tired out by the exertion, they failed to make the nine miles before nightfall and had to continue their walk in darkness. The way from Saginaw to Frankentrost had been cleared until within a half mile of our settlement. When the women reached this end of the path, they lost their bearings and began an aimless march through the trackless forest. They walked until exhausted, and then lay down near a large fallen tree in the snow. They knew that they were within measurable distance of Frankentrost, and so they attempted to make their presence known by means of loud and repeated cries. The sons of my brother also heard these cries, just before retiring for the night, but they thought the shouting originated from certain Indians who were out hunting, and who had spent the previous night near this spot. Closely locked in each other's arms, the women commended their souls to God and soon were fast asleep. Towards morning they were aroused from their slumbers by the lowing of cows which they heard in the distance. Following up this sound, they arrived in Frankentrost on New Year's Day morning, just as the horns were being blown for the first service.

"We had no church-bells in Frankentrost in those days by means of which the people might be called to services at the appointed hours, and so we had to use some other means. Announcing the hour of divine services by some public signal was all the more necessary as there were at that time few clocks in the various households which could be depended upon as timepieces. These signals were given by means of a tin horn, the kind used by housewives to call their husbands from the field at meal-times. Half an hour before the beginning of services I would blow my tin horn, and immediately the signal was passed on from household to household by means of similar instruments. Whoever had a watch or clock that still was in running order, at such times would set it, since 'the Herr Pastor's watch surely must have correct time.'

"Divine services were continued at the church in the same manner as they had been inaugurated in our log-cabin sanctuary, except that in the winter-months there were no daily morning and evening services. Instead, there were weekday services every Wednesday and Friday morning. On Sunday afternoons public catechizations were held with the congregation. At first there were but a few children in the colony, hardly more than three or four old enough to answer questions upon the Catechism. I referred to this circumstance somewhat regretfully one Sunday during catechization. It was then that the men and women present

said of one accord: 'Why, pastor, just ask us grown people; we shall answer as well as we can, and when we fail, you can tell us.' Such became the arrangement, and so it remained customary at Frankentrost as long as I was pastor there.

"May future generations not forget that at the time when my first sons, Conrad and August, were born, there was still the grand primeval American forest covering the greater part of what is now prosperous, beautiful Frankentrost; that at night the bears would utter their howls and the wolves their shrieks, and the red Indian would call during the day, often also at night, at the parsonage in Frankentrost. It would happen upon such occasions that the brown Indian girls would lug around the little, black-eyed sons of the German Mekadikonjeh (Pastor), and would make them little presents of beautifully embroidered moccasins, little baskets and boxes made of birch-bark, sometimes filled with maple-sugar. The family of the old Indian medicine man was frequently seen at our parsonage. They would generally bring a piece of deer or other venison, but would, of course, not refuse gifts offered in exchange. One stormy winter's eve the old medicine man showed up at our house with both of his wives. The younger of these had a papoose about half a year old. They made themselves comfortable around the warm stove, and the old medicine man kept on feeding the blaze during the night. On the following morning they ate corn-bread with us and drank a cup of coffee, and then departed with a hearty 'Bushu-ni-kawnis' (Good-bye, dear friends). Several times it happened that we took our boys with us when invited to Craemer's in Frankenmuth. Then brother Craemer would send the two grown-up daughters of the medicine man, who would carry the boys, Indian style, upon their backs. Thus we would go to Frankenmuth, and back to Frankentrost. Ah, those were times!"

### **In Conclusion.**

"And now, dear reader," writes Rev. E. A. Mayer in his history of the congregation of Frankenmuth, "now look backwards and consider the days that are past, and the ways of God with our fathers — are not the leadings of the Almighty and His protecting hand everywhere in evidence? Has He not guarded them as the apple of His eye? We, the younger generation, have entered into an inheritance which the fathers obtained partly through fierce outward and inner conflicts. Shall we not praise the mercies of God, who so clearly manifested His faithfulness in His dealings with them? And as we view the perils which menace our spiritual heritage, shall not the earnest petition be joined to our thanksgiving: Preserve unto us, O Lord, Thy Word! Abide with us, continue upon us Thy grace, Thy light, Thy blessing, Thy protection — ? And shall not a fruition of such prayers be, first of all, that we stand guard faithfully over the deposit of divine truth entrusted to us, and secure unto future generations that faithful adherence to the Lutheran confession, to churchly custom, and piety of life which is the rich legacy left us by our fathers? Verily, the Lord has entrusted much to our charge, He will require much at our hands!"



